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Victoria in 1962

STEADY progress by the British Columbia Electric Company, Ltd., in work to remove overhead cables in some 30 blocks of the downtown business district; the City's current arrangements to remodel and improve street lighting in the same area, with the contemplated, and much-needed, shopping mall under civic auspices should all be completed and in use by the time Victoria celebrates its centenary in 1962. It requires little imagination to envisage the tremendous improvement these changes will work in the appearance of the central business portion of the community.

Victoria has wide streets and a more or less open skyline; when the wires are gone these features will stand out. It can hardly be doubted either that this multiple approach to improving the appearance of the city will be attended by a decided spurt on the part of private property owners to improve their own business premises, in line with the general rehabilitation scheme. The résult should be a business section which sparkles.

The City and the public utility concern are working together in dovetailing the necessary work that must be done on city streets, so that stage by stage the cable burying, street illumination and other features of the task can be done in progression. A larger and more embracing co-operation than this, however, would be desirable regarding the business community as a whole. Perhaps the elements of this exist already in the recently completed profiles by the town planning commission insofar as they affect the central downtown area. The 30 blocks concerned must be related to the main approaches to the city, to traffic and all other requirements. It is none too early to think about the rounding out of what is basically a face-lifting operation, with early in 1962 as a deadline.

There is need of course of proper parking facilities, and the mall is expected to take care of much of that. There are also other matters to be considered; including building heights and clearances, color schemes on downtown premises, street and store signs in vogue and many incidental items. The impetus to a general improvement will be there, and it should be indulged in a co-operative fashion by the community as a whole. If that is done, Victoria will be ready for the gala occasion of its hundredth year.

Hillary Denied

SIR EDMUND HILLARY has been blocked in his ambition to have a second try at Mount Everest, this time from the Tibetan side. The Hunt expedition of 1953 which saw the New Zealand mountaineer and the Sherpa Tensing score an epic summit triumph was based on a south approach. All previous unsuccessful Everest attempts had been through Tibet, and there will be a continuing desire among Everesters to win success by this route.

Current events in Tibet would be a good excuse to deny permission to a Hillary expedition but that will not be the real reason for the refusal. By the time such an assault on the mountain could be staged Tibet will be brought to the Chinese heel and an expedition of climbers would pose no awkward interference. Sir Edmund said before the uprising in Tibet, in fact, that he was not too optimistic about being permitted to enter that Communist-dominated land. Probably he had in mind that outsiders would not be allowed a chance to tackle Everest from the north.

The highest mountain in the world has been climbed now by two expeditions; by the British group in 1953 and by a Swiss team in 1956. That glory has been won, but there is still great prestige to be gained by those who duplicate the feat from the Tibet side, hitherto impregnable to all attempts. The Soviet and Red Chinese authorities in concert might well want to keep this preserve for themselves, at least until one or other of their own likely attempts have succeeded. Everything nowadays is enveloped in world politics and prestige. In addition there is the established fact that Communists never make things easy for Western approaches of any kind.

National Wild Life Week

BEGINNING today, National Wild Life Week will be observed across Canada, culminating in Nature Sunday a week hence with special observances in all churches. Among the innumerable "weeks" publicized with monotonous regularity nowadays, this one enjoys the distinction of having been created by act of Parliament in 1947, with the unanimous assent of both Houses.

National Wild Life Week is not designed for the promotion of sales of any brand of merchandise or the solicitation of money. Its purpose is purely educational, to help awaken public interest in conservation not only of bird and animal life but of all natural resources which today more than at any other time in history are in danger of destruction and waste for material gain or selfish pleasure. Future generations will be the beneficiaries of the efforts being put forth today to preserve as much as possible of the bounty nature has bestowed on Canada.

In marking Wild Life Week Canadians also do honor to the memory of the late Jack Miner, that truly great nature lover and protector of God's creatures whose noble work is being carried on in perpetuity by the Jack Miner Foundation. By Dominion statute Wild Life Week always is observed in the week of Jack Miner's birthday, April 10, which by happy coincidence is the time when the migratory birds are returning from the south to nest and raise their young in Canada's breeding grounds.

Island Editors Say

Government Thumb

B.C. Power Commission, under its new "top brass," adds up to a picture of a Crown corporation more closely than ever under the thumb of the government. The B.C. public is unlikely again to witness a general manager resigning because of disagreement with official policy: the government will be looking over the general manager's shoulder the whole time.

If this is what Mr. Bennett wants he has made sure of it, with two ministers of the Crown among four new commissioners selected, and a former federal government servant as the new chairman, namely, Dr. Hugh Keenleyside, well-known diplomat and United Nations official.

It is a matter of open conjecture as to where B.C. Power Commission is now heading.

—COWICHAN LEADER

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Year-Round Service

The first test of the year of the new facilities enjoyed by Washington State ferry vessels came on Sunday, when the Illahee docked at Sidney without effort. Despite a howling gale the Illahee came through with flying colors.

The test was of considerable interest here. In past years the effort of docking under such conditions has on occasion proved too formidable and the vessel has returned to the American side without disembarking a passenger. The critics of the new Sidney wharf have warmly contended that gales would automatically prohibit the vessels' docking.

Sunday's demonstration clearly vindicates the choice of Sidney by the ferry line. There is no longer cause for suggesting that weather of any severity should serve as a barrier to a year-round service here.

—SIDNEY REVIEW

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Too Many Signs

Improvement in the highways of the province has resulted in the demand for 60 m.p.h., and we agree that the change was in the best interests. We would go further, however, and set the limit on all open highways at 60 m.p.h., not just some sections, and thus eliminate all but necessary signs.

By eliminating the signs, a driver is enabled to concentrate his attention on driving his vehicle. The only signs needed are those cautioning a driver to reduce his speed at curves, bridges and the like. A driver needs all his attention for the road and the multiplicity of signs and other distractions tends to defeat their purpose of increasing highway safety.

—WEST COAST ADVOCATE

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Only Salvation

The authorities are much too lax when they do find evidence that a young driver is lacking in judgment. There are innumerable cases where young men have been permitted to continue driving after they have demonstrated that they lack this essential quality and even when their licences are suspended the periods of suspension are often much too short.

Both the courts and parents must come to realize that getting tough with these young men during the critical years from 16 to 25 may be the only way to save them and others from serious injury or death.

—LADYSMITH CHRONICLE

Daffodil Time...

From the corner of Douglas Street and Dallas Road —Photo by CECIL CLARE

Thinking Aloud

". . . of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—of cabbages and kings."

By TOM TAYLOR

FOR most of us the French Foreign Legion has a romantic tang which comes from reading books like "Beau Geste" or "Under Two Flags" and watching movies of gallant legionnaires keeping the Tricolor flying over desert outposts.

Actually what we don't know about this legendary Legion would fill a book as big as Ouida's considerable tome. One thing we fail to appreciate is that to a great extent the Legion is German, not French. Remembering that it was a militaristic Germany which invoked two world wars this should not be too surprising. The Germans are good fighters, perhaps the world's best.

It may be an instinctive bent that takes them into the Legion. In English-speaking countries the modern angry young men prefer pens to swords. By contrast their German counterparts have been drifting to the Algerian desert. Germans have for long been the backbone of the French Foreign Legion, and currently constitute about 80 per cent of its total strength.

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Bertie Cecil, mentioned here the other day, sought sanctuary in the Legion to save his brother's honor, and fictionally at least this force has been a hiding-place for matinee idols. Probably it was always a haven for fugitives from the police, in addition to genuine adventurers. Among the German legionnaires of today are former SS men in disfavor after the war, as well as a postwar generation seeking those far-off places which always look green.

Long ago when a man joined the Legion that was the end of the matter as far as his own country was concerned. It couldn't have cared less about him. Not now, though. The German Bundestag wants its men back, especially the younger ones, since it has an army of its own again. With Soviet Russia on its borders you can't blame the Bundestag for taking a dim view of the German-buttressed Legion. Some 20,000 of them are boys between the ages of 18 and 21, just the right kind of material for Germany's own home-front legions.

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The dispute between France and Germany over recruiting is somewhat complicated. German law doesn't permit a person to bind himself by contract until he is 21 years of age. Under French law he can do so when he is 18. This is a nice legal point calculated to extend over a long period, since naturally the French don't want to lose their German legionnaires.

Sheer attrition solves many problems, and the modern Foreign Legion is no exception to its impact. The Algerian rebels are weaning young Germans away from their former enthusiasm, aided by discovery on the latter's part that distant places are not always green and that in Algeria in fact they are decidedly arid. Some 4,000 of them deserted en masse not long ago, having lost their romantic notions about foreign service or forgotten what it was they went into the Legion to forget. Discreet German missions abroad help the disillusioned to get back to home, love and beauty.

This kind of traffic might have shocked the oldtime legionnaires, or at least those who fill the pages of fictional extravaganza. We live in different times, however. Oaths of allegiance do not mean what once they did. The desire to escape from the Legion might seem to deny also the alleged belligerent nature of Germans, although experience in this desert force should make formidable soldiers if the escapees don a German uniform. At all events it looks as though one of these days the only real French Foreign Legion will be that depicted between book covers or on the silver screen.

Letter from London

Era of the Mass Market

By RICHARD L. THOMAS

ONE of the things which seems to have changed most in the modern world is our sense of values. As a case in point "My Fair Lady"—still packing them in despite the departure of Mr. Rex Harrison from the cast, and which proudly advertises that "good seats are available for 1960" is regarded, with some justification, as the theatrical smash hit of the century. It packs in the patrons at the rate of approximately 2,400 for each performance, which works out roughly at about 750,000 people a year.

What it is doing at Drury Lane it is still doing in New York and in Australia, and a week or two ago a Swedish version was staged in Stockholm, and what the translator did with the minor refinements of the English language in Swedish should have some scholarly interest. The point is that "My Fair Lady" is undoubtedly a smash hit in every sense of the term, artistically, financially, and entertainingly. It has made millions for the composers, for Mr. Bernard Shaw's estate (and ironically the National Gallery in Dublin) and fabulous sums for the performers.

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So far so good. Yet the other day a certain play was given on television and the audience rating was stated as something less than a million viewers. That, it seems, is a smash flop. Television audiences in Britain range from 8,000,000 down to about 200,000, but anything under a couple of million is regarded as a failure. What can pack Drury Lane Theatre for two years and make a smash hit becomes a flop if it can attract only the same number of people sitting at home or in a pub. It is just one of those commentaries on comparative values which does not make sense.

A short while ago a newspaper selling more than 500,000 copies a day and making a good profit was closed down so that its presses could be leased to another newspaper selling millions—because it would make more profit that way. A periodical selling 50,000 copies a week ceased publication merely because its quite reasonable profits were not worth while for a large publishing house. So it goes on.

Even profit and success has become something relative. There was, for example, a very efficient lens cleaner tissue on the English market. Suddenly it ceased to be available. The manufacturers told me that it sold quite well, that it made a reasonable profit, but the policy of the firm was that if a line did not make a certain profit in actual cash (not percentage) the line was discontinued—and discontinued it was to the disappointment of thousands of customers.

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The other day I inquired at a local village store for a well known brand of canned food. The owner of the shop said that he could not get it because the manufacturers would not supply it—and the reason was that they insisted upon a minimum monthly order and anyone whose business did not justify that minimum had to go without. The reason, it seems, is that large supplies to chain stores made for easier bookkeeping and that a multiplicity of small accounts was something which they could do without. The idea, it seems, is that the small shopkeeper should set up a co-operative buying organization to buy in bulk and sell in small quantities.

It seems as though the mass market has taken possession of everything. The old idea that precious jewels come in small parcels is no longer valid—except in the jewelry trade. There is of course nothing very new about it. Fifty years ago every town had its own banker; today seven banks control the banking of the United Kingdom for all practical purposes. At the turn of the century most villages had their own brewery and reputations of hamlets were made on the quality of their beer. The small local brewer has disappeared along with the village craftsman and village industry. It is the age of mass production.

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There is no moral in this piece—merely an inquiry as to why something which attracts a two-million audience on television should be regarded as a comparative flop whilst the same number of people attracted to a theatre in 600 or 700 performances should provide an outstanding success. An actor who makes a gaff on television may well ruin his professional career. An author may be branded as a flop because his television play does not attract millions of viewers. It is a world of extremes. Inversely an actor may be made for life because he happens to give one good performance on television, even though he may be incapable of another.

And relative values are not just a matter of art and or business. It is affecting us morally. Homosexuals form societies to protect their interests, divorce carries no social stigma (maybe it never should) and children in our schools are taught to earn a living instead of learning how to live.

More and more religion seems to be regarded as an outworn myth and the criterion of success is to make the most money in the least possible time, and no task is worth while unless it appeals to a mass reaction.

The query is where do we go from here? The frightening inference may be gathered by the experience of an infant school teacher who one morning found that the pupils were suffering from mass melancholia in the same way as groups are sometimes affected by mass hysteria. It was traced eventually to the previous night's television program in which a dog had been injured. The five-year-old children were still suffering the emotional impact of that incident.

How far are we from Mr. Orwell's 1984? How do we redress our sense of values?

Time Capsule . . . — *By G. E. Mortimore*

Dreadnought Fever

"A FULLY-EQUIPPED, unsinkable lifeboat" was donated by Arthur S. Denny to Foul Bay Community Association 25 years ago, to rescue people in distress in the Trial Island tide-rip.

A plot to poison the royal swans at Elk Lake was disclosed by Cecil French, a member of the advisory committee governing the bird sanctuary. Nine swans, some of them presented to Victoria by His Majesty King George V, had been poisoned by an unknown sadist who fed the birds corn soaked in salt water.

E. A. George Luxton of 1765 Haultain Street, Victoria, a University of B.C. student, won a $1,000 Royal Bank of Canada fellowship in a Canada-wide essay contest. He was a former pupil of St. Michael's School and Brentwood College. . . . Ralph G. D. Moore, formerly of Victoria, was awarded a $350 National Research Council bursary for his work in chemistry at UBC.

F. Dudley Wickett was named head of Victoria Service Clubs' Council. . . . W. H. Kinsman was re-elected president of Victoria Liberal Association.

A well-digger, T. Boss, escaped with his life in a cave-in at Windthorst, Sask., because he wore an old steel helmet from 1914-18.

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PATRIOTS boiled with anger 50 years ago, because Britain's naval building program lagged behind Germany's.

The Navy League clamored for a minimum of eight "Dreadnoughts" to be built in 1909-10. New Zealand offered a battleship. Australia was raising money for the navy too.

"The newspapers have been filled with lurid pictures of the German peril. Every retired admiral in the kingdom has been utilizing the breezy language of the quarterdeck in condemning 'the blundering lords of the admiralty'."

There was a dismal parallel between the British clamor for more and bigger ships in 1909 and the American clamor for more and bigger rockets with nuclear warheads in 1959.

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A CORRUPT government official was dismissed from office by Governor James Douglas 100 years ago. The man should have been fired long before, the British Colonist said.

"If a miner visited Mr. —— at his office, and wished to secure a water privilege for the purpose of bringing in a ditch in order to facilitate mining operations, and thereby develop the resources of this virgin country, he was coolly informed that a 'permit' to secure such water rights would not be given unless (the government official) was first allowed an interest in the ditch company.

"It remains a mystery to this day how Gov. Douglas was ever honeyfuggled into giving such an unworthy personage so important a position."

(That unfamiliar word in the last paragraph is still in Webster's dictionary. It is spelled "honeyfogled" or "honeyfugled," and listed as American slang, meaning "cajoled," or "wheedled.")

News from England told of the birth of a new grandson to Queen Victoria and heir to the throne of Germany, which caused "general rejoicing." Englishmen felt that Germany would see in the event "the opening of a new prospect of happiness and good government."

—FROM COLONIST FILES

The Packsack

Of GREGORY CLARK

ONE good thing TV is doing in presenting these old, old movies in the late, late shows is to demonstrate the drastic changes that occur, in a mere matter of ten or twenty years, in the wit and humor of our own generation. What passed for real sharp wit in the movies in 1930 falls pitiably flat today. I remember rolling in the aisle at many of the excruciating sallies in the early comedies in which Irene Dunne starred. These were top-drawer pictures, revealing what better class society was like, full of sly banter and witty quips. Man, how they have shrunk!

And a humorous character, even in the early forties, bears little if any resemblance to those we gleefully accept as humorous characters today.

There are exceptions, but so few as only to prove the rule. No fashion changes more surprisingly than the fashion of humor and wit. The clothes in those old, stylish pictures may cause us old ones to smile ruefully, and the young ones to snicker. But it is the wordage that shocks.

Exceptions? Well, each to his taste. But I would go fifty miles to see the oldest of pictures in which W. C. Fields appeared, if only as a bit player; and a hundred miles, on a rainy night, to see one of those incomparable short-shorts in which Robert Benchley worked, all by himself.